



## **IslHornAfr**

### **Islam in the Horn of Africa. A Comparative Literary Approach**

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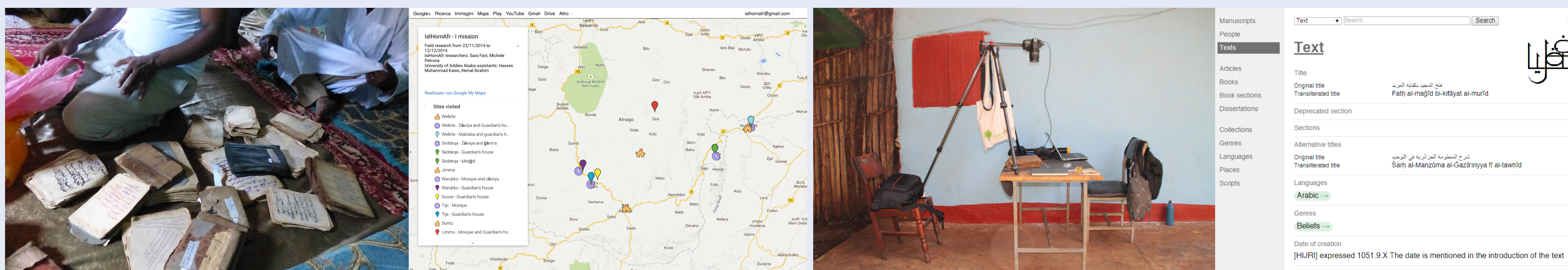


# IsiHornAfr

## Islam in the Horn of Africa A Comparative Literary Approach

The project IsiHornAfr has been conceived as a contribution to both African and Islamic studies, with the aim of producing a critical and comprehensive picture of the Islamic literary history of the Horn of Africa. The project is funded by the European Research Council (Advanced Grant no. 322849) for the period 2013-2018.

The project primarily aims to provide a pilot study of the Islamic history in Africa as it is reflected in the literary traditions of the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia). Texts (whether already available or collected during the course of the project) will be classified according to their genres, contents, titles, authors, places of creation, number of witnesses, distribution of witnesses, and linguistic and graphic peculiarities. Previously unknown and unpublished texts will be identified. Texts in Arabic will be considered alongside those written in local languages. Not only the local literary production but also locally copied texts of foreign origin will be considered. A re-evaluation of the external Islamic sources dealing with these areas will complete the picture.

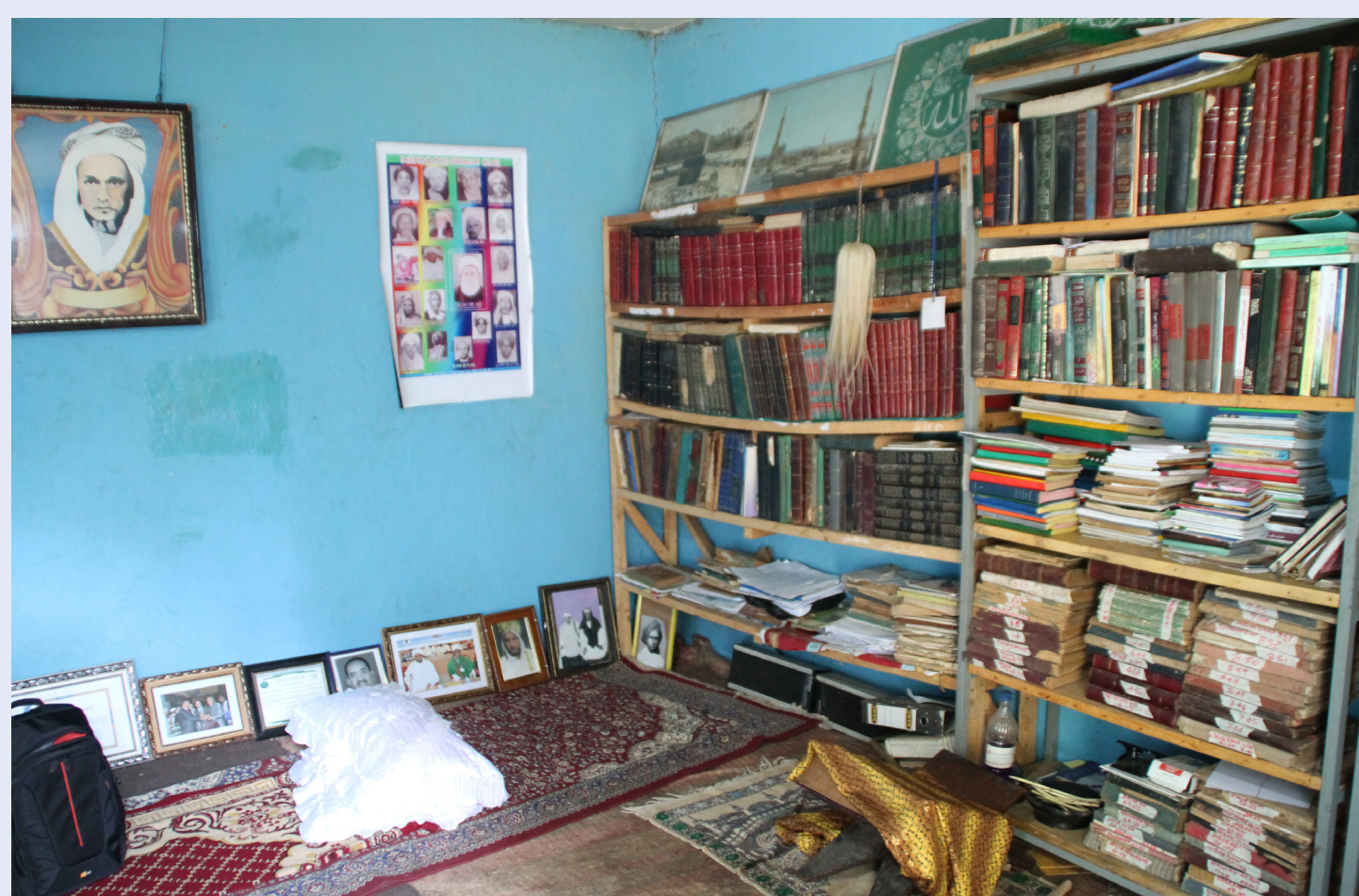


### Languages

The majority of the texts used by the Muslims in the Horn of Africa are composed and transmitted in Arabic. However, an important number of texts (whether entire manuscripts or marginal additions) in local languages (as a rule, in Arabic script, 'aḡamī) exist. The languages within the project area include, among others, Afar, Amharic, Argobba, Gurage, Harari, Oromo, Saho, Somali, Tigrinya, and Tigre.

### Manuscript research

The project team collects data from manuscripts and books in circulation in the Horn of Africa. Besides evaluating European library collections, first-hand field research is organized in order to access previously unknown material. During field missions to Ethiopia, Somaliland, Djibouti (conducted), and possibly Eritrea (envisaged), manuscripts from libraries and collections (mosques, shrines, private homes) are recorded, digitized, and described.



### Main goals

- expand the corpus of available texts;
- create a growing database of African Islamic literature, biography and topography;
- classify the texts according to their genres, contents, titles, authors, places of creation, number of witnesses, distribution of witnesses, linguistic and graphic peculiarities;
- identify previously unknown texts and present them to the scientific community;
- edit and publish the most important testimonies of theological and legal thought as well as of historiographic and hagiographic penmanship;
- compare the intellectual background between the different subregions of the focus area; and between the African "local" Islam and the "mainstream" Islamic tradition;
- place the results into an Islamic traditional context following a survey of Islamic sources on the Horn of Africa;
- increase the awareness of Islam in Africa for the scholarship, and the awareness of the value of local tradition in Africa itself, as well as contribute to the understanding of the processes of Islamization and their dependence of and effect upon local contexts.

### Texts

Not only the local literary production of the Horn of Africa but also locally copied texts of foreign origin are being considered. Texts transmitted by the manuscripts and the manuscripts' physical make-up are being studied in a general comparative perspective, trying to reveal connections between the Horn and the 'mainstream' Islamic world on the one hand and pinpoint the individual character of the local Islamic teaching on the other hand. A re-evaluation of external Islamic sources dealing with the project areas shall complete the picture.

### Project team

Principal Investigator:  
Prof. Alessandro Gori

### Research Associates:

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Dr. Anne Regourd  
Dr. Irmeli Perho  
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### Database

All texts (main texts and additional texts in the manuscripts, documents, books, whether in Arabic or in local languages) are classified with the help of the project database according to their genres, contents, titles, authors, places of creation, number of witnesses, distribution of witnesses, and linguistic and graphic peculiarities. The relational database also contains metadata on persons (authors, copyists, scholars) and places (sites of mosques and shrines, manuscript collections, centres of Islamic learning, etc.).